
Accountability for Learner Outcomes and Institutional Performance

The Context

In order to guarantee that students receive the high-quality education that is promised to them, accountability must be infused throughout California's education system. A meaningful system of accountability builds on clear expectations by providing a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of all participants, evaluating the outcomes of efforts, and ensuring that consequences are attached to those outcomes as a means to influence their improvement.

Effective accountability requires the linkage of authority and responsibility throughout our system of education. In this context, accountability is fostered by clearly defining the responsibilities of each participant in the system, ensuring that sufficient authority is afforded

“It is important to focus on the consequences of programs, old and new, to keep uncovering their shortcomings so that the message gets through, and to locate those programs that do have positive effects and can be extended and expanded.”

-- Carol Weiss, 1989

each participant to carry out those responsibilities, and then ensuring that those responsibilities are carried out. Currently, efforts to improve accountability in public education are complicated by overlapping responsibilities among local, regional, and state entities and by a lack of alignment between the responsibilities assigned to various entities and the authority they have been provided to carry out those responsibilities. Every effort to solve the special problems that exist at different levels of our public education system in isolation one from the other is met with a stubborn reality – that the problems are not soluble until education is understood as a coherent process. How California structures and governs education is crucial to our commitment to infusing greater accountability in public education. This Plan clarifies what responsibilities should be assigned to what entities at the state, regional, and local levels.

On a daily basis, elected officials, agency heads, school district and campus academic leaders, professional educators and, most important of all, the citizens of California are being asked to pass judgment on a bewildering array of new educational initiatives without the comprehensive, reliable, flexibly arranged, easily accessible, and timely data needed to make informed judgments. California collects a considerable amount of data on students, schools, and colleges; but that data collection is fragmented, and the data collected more directly serve the need to meet various state and federal reporting requirements

than to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of public and private education in increasing student achievement.

A majority of Americans and Californians are calling for greater accountability for our public education system. Despite a growing ambivalence about the amount of testing that is taking place in public schools, the public still supports testing that measures student learning against a clear set of standards but dislikes any accountability system that relies too heavily on testing at the expense of broader-based evaluations of school performance. The public understands that testing provides a gauge for identifying significant strengths of schools that can be built upon, immediate needs that must be addressed, and eventual changes that it would be desirable to implement. Testing should not just monitor student achievement, it should also be used to advance teaching and learning in all schools.

Surveys of public opinion also reveal that efforts to develop accountability systems should take a positive view of public education.⁴⁸ There is little to be gained by giving in to the rhetoric of crisis and failure of schools. It is still the case that the very best students enrolled in American public schools compete well with the very best students in other nations. Rather, states should focus on long-term progress desired and study successful schools, learn what they are doing right, and seek to replicate those activities in other schools. In the minds of the public, money has much to do with school performance. They view school performance in three tiers: schools located in high income areas that are good to excellent; schools located in middle income areas that are fair to good but for which there is ample room for improvement; and schools located in low income areas that provide an inadequate education or that are in crisis. While they believe more money must be invested in public schools, they do not believe that money alone will make the difference; there must also be measures in place to hold teachers and administrators accountable for student learning. They also express a fear that accountability systems that build too tight a relationship between school performance and funding may have the unintended effect of displacing the goal of improving student learning for doing whatever it takes to attract additional money.

The goals of an education accountability system should be carefully considered before being implemented. Too often goals are only casually considered if they are considered at all. On the surface, the purposes of accountability appear to be self-evident: to identify and punish low performers and to provide rewards and incentives for higher performance. The more important objective, however, should be to derive consensus on what is meant by performance. What is it about education that is important to individuals, the State, and society at large? What are our expectations about effectiveness and efficiency? What about breadth of opportunity and depth of achievement? These are the questions that give accountability its deeper meaning, and efforts to collaboratively generate answers to them are what provide the 'buy-in' from stakeholders that ultimately will make or break any accountability system. The process of collaboratively defining what is meant by performance will also go a long way toward addressing another key impediment to change, lack of trust. Most stakeholders believe in their own capacity to set rigorous and fair standards but distrust the ability or will of others to do so. Hence, many stakeholders are reluctant to embrace any accountability system without detailed understanding of how it will affect their interests. Further, if they perceive too great an emphasis is being given

⁴⁸ Educational Testing Service, *A Measured Response: Americans Speak on Education Reform*, (2001).

to ways to punish low performance, they may actively oppose or seek to undermine any accountability system.

Another critical issue to address in any effort to establish accountability in public education is the question of who should be held accountable for what and to whom. No one actor can be held entirely or even largely responsible for any given outcome. The education process is simply too complex with too many actors. Key actors that must be considered include the following:

- Students – traditionally they have borne the full burden of educational outcomes. Either they applied themselves to learning or they didn't. Student failure to learn was due to either a lack of effort or a lack of intelligence.
- Peer groups – students are influenced significantly by the things their peer groups value. Students who work too hard to achieve can face rejection and/or ridicule from their peers. Who is responsible for peer influences? Parents? Students and schools? Culture?
- Teachers and faculty – recent studies have emphasized the role of teachers in facilitating student achievement at all levels of education. They have often been blamed for not having subject matter competence or poor pedagogical skills, when students have not achieve at desired levels. Such assignment of blame, however, ignores the fact that students have different abilities and dispositions for learning. A student who refuses to apply him/herself to learning will not achieve no matter how well prepared the teacher is.
- Schools and colleges – they also play a role in promoting student achievement. Do they provide adequate support and the tools needed by teachers to do an effective job of providing high-quality education opportunities to students? Is the curriculum relevant and aligned across grade levels?
- Government – all of the other actors in public education are influenced by the actions taken by federal, state, and local government. Whether resources are adequate to accomplish the educational standards adopted and whether goals are clearly understood are both affected by government decisions. Laws and regulations passed by federal, state, and local government largely shape what public education does.
- Business – it has traditionally been viewed as a customer of education and as having a responsibility to clearly communicate the knowledge and skills it wants in future employees. Increasingly business has also become a provider of education, offering training and professional development for its employees, and even developing courses and skill certifications that are offered to a larger audience. This role has made business a key player with an important responsibility to improve educational performance.

None of the actors in the foregoing list account for the influence, and consequent responsibility, of organized groups like labor unions, professional associations, accrediting bodies, and, in the case of postsecondary education, academic/faculty senates. What quickly becomes apparent is that an accountability system, to be effective, must be approached from the perspective of shared responsibility, with all stakeholders recognizing and accepting their share of responsibility for ensuring and sustaining educational improvement over time.

After careful consideration of the goals to be pursued and who should be assigned what responsibilities, it is important to decide what measures will be used to evaluate educational performance at the various levels. The goals pursued will largely define what measures are

appropriate and valid for evaluating performance. The differing missions assigned to the various education providers will complicate the measures. Public school performance, for instance, can usually be measured against clearly stated academic content and proficiency standards with either standardized or criterion-referenced test instruments. However, postsecondary education providers usually do not have a common body of knowledge that is expected to be taught to every student, have multiple majors with unique competency requirements, have faculty who are responsible for generating new knowledge as well as disseminating current knowledge, and so on. Compliance audits and program or policy reviews have been typical ways in which states have attempted to hold postsecondary institutions accountable. The differences in accountability approaches and educational missions mentioned previously underscore the need to consider multiple measures, including qualitative measures, tailored to the particular education outcomes desired and to particular types of education institutions. Not every desired outcome can be easily quantified.

Performance depends on both motivation and capacity. If a person or institution is unmotivated to perform at high levels, no amount of capacity-building will make a difference. Conversely, if a person or institution has only limited capacity to perform at high levels, no level of motivation will yield the desired performance level. Effective accountability systems must consider both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives that can be provided to individuals and institutions to motivate them to use their capacities more effectively, as well as to help them build their capacities when they are insufficient to achieve the desired performance levels.⁴⁹

Key concerns in designing an accountability system for public education should include at least the following:

- Are the desired outcomes clearly stated and measurable?
- What are the barriers to achieving the desired outcomes; what are the obstacles that must be overcome?
- What tools, strategies, and/or resources are available to help bring about the desired changes?
- Who are the key actors needed to implement the accountability system; which of them have roles in maintaining the status quo?
- Are the desired changes easy to implement or will (they) require experimentation, innovation, and learning, to accomplish?
- Is it acceptable to have change occur incrementally over time, or is rapid, radical change needed in a shorter time period?

Finally, it is important to make provision for holding the accountability system itself accountable for achieving the objectives for which it was designed, just as students and education providers are held accountable. Even the best-designed accountability system cannot be expected to anticipate and account for every aspect of the education enterprise. It may need to be periodically refined. This fact should not be interpreted as a need for the system to be modified annually. Change takes time, and policymakers must be patient to allow the accountability system to take root and to collect sufficient data to adequately inform an evaluation of progress.

⁴⁹ Paul E. Lingenfelter, "Focus on Educational Accountability," *Network News*, SHEEO, Volume 20, No.3, (November 2001)

California Today

California has made significant but insufficient steps to instill greater accountability in its public schools. Beginning in 1998, the State Board of Education began adopting a set of academic content standards for all of its public schools. The standards specify in detail what should be taught at each grade level in the areas of mathematics, English/language arts, science, social science, and the performing arts. For the first time, there is no ambiguity about what is to be taught to all students enrolled in public schools. Until adoption of these standards, schools throughout the state offered courses that carried the same or similar titles but with content that differed radically. The consequences of this legacy have been evident in both the differential performance of students on standardized assessment instruments and students' differential eligibility for admission to the California State University and the University of California. It has also been evident in the persistence of demand for remedial instruction by students admitted to California State University and University of California campuses, students who have distinguished themselves from their peers by being among the top one-third or one-eighth of all public high school graduates in the state, respectively.

State policymakers are currently in the process of completing a determination of the level of proficiency desired from all students in each of the content areas. This determination is an important next step, as it sets the benchmark against which judgments will be made about the adequacy of student achievement as measured by the State's mandated test instrument. Although proficiency standards are expected to be high in each area, there is no expectation that student performance will, or should, yield a normal-curve distribution of student achievement. Rather, it represents the benchmark that public schools are striving to achieve with all students and against which decisions will be made about the resources needed to achieve that goal. Unfortunately, California erred in its decision to impose use of a standardized test, the Stanford Achievement Test Version 9 (SAT-9) as the measure of student achievement. That decision was motivated more by political considerations than by the alignment of the test items with the content the State decided should be taught in every public school. The consequences of this decision were predictable: initial student performance results on the SAT-9 were disappointing, complaints about the inappropriateness of the test have been shrill and increasing, and judgments about school performance have been made on the basis of faulty data. Efforts are underway by Department of Education staff to augment the SAT-9 test with what are being referred to as standards-based test items that are aligned to the adopted academic content standards.

In 2000, the Governor proposed and the Legislature adopted a series of incentives to further the cause of accountability for public schools. These incentives included monetary rewards for schools and school personnel that meet or exceed performance targets set for each school. It also included disincentives for low-performing schools, ranging from removal of the principal for persistent low performance to identification of schools required or invited to participate in the Intensive Intervention-Underperforming Schools Program (II-USP). Schools participating in the II-USP program, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, are required to develop plans and strategies for improving student achievement within a designated time period or risk state take-

over. One unintended consequence of these incentives has been the perception by teachers of increased pressure to ‘teach to the test,’ even though the dominant test at the time (SAT-9) bore little relationship to California’s academic content standards. More time has been devoted to teaching test-taking strategies and, in some more extreme cases, altering student test scores or compromising the security of the test itself in an effort to boost student scores. The transition to the standards-based test items should alleviate some of this concern and redirect teacher attention to teaching the content standards since they are what the test will be assessing.

Another unintended consequence of the State Testing and Reporting (STAR) system has been heightened pressure on principals, since they alone have been subject to removal if school performance did not improve significantly. There was no provision initially to grant principals the authority to remove or reassign teachers who were ineffective in promoting student achievement. Union-negotiated contracts that protect teacher employment and restrict reassignments on the basis of seniority further complicate the situation. This fact has hindered California’s efforts to attract and retain qualified school leadership, because prospective administrators understand that they will be held accountable for outcomes which they will not be able to influence through exercising management authority.

Yet another impediment to effective accountability in public schools is the confusion of roles and responsibility for governance and oversight. California has four state-level oversight entities, without clear delineation of which is responsible for what, creating confusion for local schools and districts about what objectives they are expected to pursue – particularly when the interpretations and directives from these state entities are not always in alignment with or even complementary to each other. The result is an environment in which local districts and schools simply ‘shop around’ for an interpretation consistent with their current disposition for action. The state entities are: (1) the Governor, who appoints all members of the State Board of Education, promulgates an annual budget that sets forth priorities for education, and nearly always is the final arbiter of differences of opinion about education policy due to his line-item veto authority; (2) the State Board of Education, which is by law the policy-setting body for public schools but which has very limited ability to ensure its policies are implemented; (3) the Superintendent of Public Instruction, an elected constitutional officer who manages the California Department of Education (CDE) staff, and who has little formal policy-setting authority, but influences policy through its implementation; and (4) the Secretary for Education, originally created by former Governor Pete Wilson in 1991 by executive order as the Secretary for Child Development and Education, with a small complement of staff whose duties are largely duplicative of those in the CDE.

This confusion of roles and authority among the various state oversight entities more often than not contributes to finger pointing rather than constructive approaches to problem solving. This result is particularly the case when school performance falls below desired levels. Such finger pointing sends mixed messages to local districts and schools as to the State’s priorities for student achievement and institutional performance. An additional layer of complexity exists when the role of county offices of education is factored in. By constitutional provision, every county has a county superintendent of schools and a county board of education, the responsibilities of whom are minimally specified in statute. In addition to approving the annual budgets of individual school districts, they have also accrued over time the role of providing

support and technical service to local districts, directly providing some educational offerings in the instance of small school districts, and serving as an appellate body with regard to local family disagreements with district decisions. All but five counties have elected county superintendents. The responsibilities of county superintendents are specified in statute. In this confusing environment of overlapping responsibilities, it is virtually impossible to hold any individual or entity accountable overall for school or district performance.

Establishing an effective accountability system for public postsecondary education has been even more elusive than for the public K-12 system. This fact results in part from the different missions assigned to each of the systems and, in part, from the differing structures of each of the systems. There is no common body of knowledge for which consensus exists about what is expected to be taught to every student enrolled in a public college or university. As a consequence, there has been no basis for establishing a measure of student achievement; and the State has had to rely on auditing compliance with state mandates and guidelines, such as admission of freshmen from among the top one-third and one-eighth of high school graduates (for the California State University and University of California systems, respectively), enrollment numbers, admission and enrollment of underrepresented student groups, numbers of transfers, and degrees awarded. Even these measures of student achievement are little more than ‘snapshots,’ since they are not specifically linked to unique students or cohort groups.

In 1998, the California Community Colleges advanced a bold proposal to break this logjam by offering to provide data on specific student outcomes, aligned with its missions, in exchange for increased state financial investment. This proposal, known as the Partnership for Excellence (PFE) Program, was billed as a ‘pay for performance’ program in which the California Community Colleges Board of Governors would define a set of discrete objectives for numbers of students achieving transfer readiness, numbers of students actually transferring to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, success of remedial education programs, percentage of students earning associate degrees and certificates, and increases in numbers of students served in workforce preparation programs. The laudable intentions of the PFE program were frustrated by the failure of the State to maintain its commitment to augment the community college’s budget by the expected amount, and a budget allocation process within the Chancellor’s Office that resulted in PFE money being distributed to each college as an entitlement rather than a reward for performance. In some ways, this outcome should have been predictable. The community colleges are required by statute to submit all policy and budget issues to consultation with a prescribed group of community college stakeholders. Moreover, constitutional provisions define the community college Board of Governors and its Chancellor’s office as state agencies, while designating local college districts as local education agencies. As a consequence, any policy directive from the Board of Governors directly, or through its administrative staff (Chancellor’s Office), is subject to a ruling by the Department of Finance (DOF) on additional cost requirements. If the DOF determines that costs would be incurred to implement the state mandate, the Chancellor’s Office is prohibited from enforcing the mandate, effectively neutralizing any directives by the Board of Governors. Under these circumstances, accountability continues to be elusive within the community college system.

Imposing accountability for student learning or any other desired outcome on the University of California is also elusive, but for very different reasons. Since being designated as a public trust

in the California constitution in 1879, the University of California has been exempt from direct control by the Legislature or the Governor. Any policy priority of the Legislature, as expressed in statute or resolution, is regarded as binding only if the University of California Regents, by resolution, agree to adopt or concur with the State's priorities. The University of California is a land-grant university and has an ethical obligation to be responsive to public needs. However, the 1879 constitutional convention sought to insulate the University from the vagaries of crass political manipulation by granting it constitutional status – a move that most observers agree has generally been a benefit to both the University and the State. It also has been an impediment at times to the State's efforts to obtain information on how public funds are being expended to achieve state goals and priorities, prompting legislative efforts to use other policy and budget mechanisms to leverage greater responsiveness to state interests.

The California State University is neither protected by the state constitution as a public trust nor affected by the separation of state and local education agencies as the community colleges are. Consequently, it has been subject to far greater control by the Legislature in the conduct of its affairs and deployment of its budget. This fact has generated great stress within the California State University system over the years and prompted a concerted effort by the Board of Trustees to achieve increased flexibility in the conduct of its affairs in exchange for being held accountable for providing evidence of the system's responsiveness to and achievement of state policy priorities. In the minds of some policy observers, the California State University's success in this regard has also spurred old aspirations to acquire a status more akin to that of the University of California.

California has had very little control over the operations of not-for-profit independent colleges and universities, despite the fact that they have been viewed as a vital component of the state's postsecondary education system. An attempt to incorporate these institutions in statutes to rid the state of private, for-profit 'diploma mill' institutions in 1989 was successfully resisted. Independent colleges and universities have argued that regional accreditation standards offer sufficient evidence of institutional quality that it is neither necessary nor desirable for the State to impose additional statutory or regulatory burdens on this sector. Nonetheless, these institutions have sought to be cooperative with the State and the efforts of the California Postsecondary Education Commission to gather and maintain data on postsecondary education outcomes. Highly prescriptive statutes have been enacted, however, to regulate the operations of private for-profit postsecondary institutions both to restore integrity to the degrees offered by these institutions and to protect Californians from fraud. The State has never achieved success in bringing these for-profit institutions into the fold as full-fledged members of the California's postsecondary education community.

For these and other reasons, including the various missions of public, private, and independent postsecondary institutions, and selectivity differences in assembling their respective student bodies, building an effective accountability system for postsecondary education has been a true conundrum for California. In response to the fiscal crisis of the early 1990's, both the California State University and University of California systems collaboratively entered into a "compact" with the Governor at that time to stabilize their funding in exchange for a commitment to meet certain performance goals. They have since renewed that effort with the current Governor in what have come to be known as "partnership agreements." While these agreements have been a

step in the right direction, they have had two primary weaknesses: they have not been publicly discussed and reported widely, and they have failed to include any measures of student learning.

The Vision

We envision an education system in which student achievement will not be left to chance or ‘innate’ intelligence, which will not tolerate sorting of students into tracks in which less is expected of some students than others, and which will categorically reject the notion that student achievement must be distributed along a bell curve. California would build and sustain an education system that would hold itself collectively accountable for the achievement of all students at or above a common standard; collect and analyze data regularly to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of its education providers; direct resources to build capacity in schools, colleges, and universities performing below desired levels; encourage replication of effective practices; and allow flexibility in the approaches taken by education institutions to achieve desired outcomes.

Our accountability system would have clear statements of a limited set of goals for each level of education provided in the state. We reaffirm our belief in, and commitment to, brokering federal, state, and local resources to ensure that families would have access to resources to provide nourishment, health care, and stimulating experiences for their young children so that they would be ready to learn upon entry to formal schooling. Elected officials would routinely ask for and analyze data on the numbers of poor families with children in California who were not receiving health care and early developmental screening to detect potential impediments to proper child development. Incentives would be provided to health and child care providers to collaborate with each other to reach unserved families with children residing in neighborhoods served by low-performing schools.

We would begin a process of expanding access to preschool for all families who desire to take advantage of it and would make full day kindergarten a requirement for all children of compulsory attendance age. We would phase in these educational services both to better manage the cost of implementation and to ensure particular attention to the improvement of the educational opportunities for students residing in neighborhoods served by our lowest performing schools before extension of those benefits to families served by higher performing schools. We would regularly review data on the achievement of students who participate in preschool and extended day kindergarten to determine how their achievement compared with that of their peers who did not participate in these services. We would also review data on the qualifications and experiences of the teachers of these students and note where additional school capacity might be required. We would require that all students enrolling in kindergarten undergo developmental screening, or have parents provide evidence that such screening had already been conducted, to ensure that any disabilities that might impede learning were identified early and appropriate interventions prescribed.

We would adhere to our academic content standards, establish desired proficiency levels for each area, strengthen our teacher preparation programs to ensure all new teachers have the content knowledge and skills to teach to those standards, complete development of criterion-referenced

assessment instruments to measure student achievement, and routinely mail school report cards to parents of enrolled students. These report cards would contain information on student achievement, and average school, district, and state achievement results. We would expand the School Accountability Report Card to include in it indicators of the ‘opportunities for teaching and learning’ that are provided in the schools and include these indicators in the Superintendent of Public Instruction’s reporting of the Academic Performance Index, and thereby assist parents in understanding both the achievement of their children relative to the opportunities provided to them, and the opportunities their children receive in comparison to the opportunities indicators that derive from the California Quality Education Model. We would direct local districts to carefully monitor student achievement data and expenditures at each school under their jurisdiction but would require annual submission of only a limited set of data on student characteristics and achievement, personnel characteristics, and status of compliance with state standards. We would identify a clear set of progressive interventions to be implemented based on evaluation of institutional performance. For low-performing schools, emphasis would be given to assessing the balance between institutional capacity and motivation. Early interventions would be aimed at increasing institutional capacity, while more severe interventions would involve dissolution of district or school leadership and appointment of new supervisory teams drawn from local constituencies and monitored by regional offices of education on behalf of the State. For high-performing schools, early interventions would focus on public recognition of schools and/or districts and listing of them as a referral for technical assistance in replicating effective practices. Continuous high performance would be rewarded with supplemental appropriations to districts/schools to enhance professional development, capacity to provide technical assistance to other schools, and improvement of teaching and learning conditions.

We envision making substantial progress in our efforts to measure student achievement in a common body of knowledge taught by all postsecondary education institutions, allowing for locally defined measures unique to our community colleges, California State University, and University of California systems. Each of our public postsecondary education systems would agree to use a modified high school exit examination as a basis for determining readiness of high school students to enroll in collegiate courses within their sector. The exam would be administered in the 11th grade year, and each system would determine an achievement score appropriate to expectations of student readiness. High school students interested in attending the California State University or the University of California, but not achieving high enough scores on the exit exam, would focus their efforts in the 12th grade to achieving the necessary levels of proficiency, and eliminating any need for remedial instruction upon college enrollment. Both the California State University and the University of California systems would provide assistance to high schools by training successful undergraduate and graduate students to provide learning support to high school students and/or encouraging them to engage in service learning activities as part of their curricular requirements. Local community colleges would provide opportunities for high school seniors to enroll concurrently to further strengthen their readiness for college or university enrollment and to accelerate their progress toward earning collegiate certificates or degrees. All three public sectors of postsecondary education would routinely provide feedback to high school principals, and to English or math department chairs as appropriate, data on the academic performance of their graduates in English and math courses completed at their respective system campuses.

We would establish a transfer associate degree program that would smooth the transition of community college students to the California State University and the University of California systems, or to California's independent colleges and universities with minimal or no loss of time or credits. The academic senates of the individual system would collaborate to revise and enhance the charge of their voluntary Intersegmental Council of Academic Senates to take the lead in efforts to align courses among the systems and class levels and to promote efficient updates when course content were revised to reflect new knowledge generated through the research of their peers. Faculty within the University of California and the California State University systems would strengthen their collaboration with each other to articulate graduate programs at the masters and doctorate levels as a means of recruiting students from underrepresented groups into, and expediting their completion of, advanced degree programs. While limiting their initial efforts to masters and doctoral programs within the same discipline, they would be prompted by the potential benefits to students to next turn their attention to opportunities for articulating graduate programs across disciplines.

We would clearly communicate the state expectation that adult education programs are intended to equip adults with skills and knowledge to be self-sufficient. A set of indicators would be in place permitting regular evaluation of the effectiveness of adult education programs. We would ensure that adequate funding would be provided to support provision of basic educational skills, English literacy and proficiency, vocational preparation, and civics in every adult education program. Establishment and modification of standards and measures for adult education performance would be located within the Department of Education, and adult education services would be delivered by high school districts independently or in collaboration with local community colleges and community-based agencies. Adult education providers would also collaborate with the State's Labor and Workforce Development Agency, which would be assigned primary responsibility for public and private workforce preparation programs, in order to ensure coordination and alignment of training production and workforce demand. Adult education programs would also be customized throughout the state by augmentation of services in the previously mentioned priority areas with other courses and training needed by adults in local communities to become self sufficient and productive members of society.

Beyond their traditional goal of providing broad access to postsecondary education, state officials would also be clearly focused on ensuring the success of those students who chose to enroll. To further this end, the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California systems would be required to annually submit all data required by the National Center for Educational Statistics and a limited set of additional data on desired student outcomes and characteristics, personnel characteristics, expenditures, and compliance with state standards. All required data would be reported by unique student identifier, to enable longitudinal monitoring of student outcomes and would be consistently submitted to the State's intersegmental education commission. Independent and private colleges and universities would be requested to submit similar data and, for certain key data on student outcomes, we would condition continued eligibility to participate in the State's financial aid program on compliance with this request.

We would take steps to better ensure quality in the educational offerings of private, for-profit institutions offering degrees, by transferring oversight and program approval to the State's

postsecondary education commission. We believe this step would be necessary to ensure that students who chose to enroll in these institutions received an education of a quality equivalent to that of public and not-for-profit, accredited independent institutions and to facilitate transitions, with minimal or no loss of credits, between and among all postsecondary education institutions approved to operate in the state. This accomplishment would not only provide greater equity in expectations for quality but would contribute to a more efficient postsecondary education enterprise by relieving some of the demand for enrollment in public institutions. The State's intersegmental education commission would monitor data on student outcomes in each type of institution and advise the Legislature and Governor of any trends indicating a need for increased scrutiny and of practices associated with high performance that might warrant replication and should therefore be disseminated.

We would anticipate the educational needs of Californians in the future by charging the State's education commissions to regularly engage in long-term planning, using comprehensive educational and demographic data as a basis for that planning. The education commissions would also collaborate with the Department of Finance's Demographic Research Unit to incorporate the unit's forecasts of California population trends and progression through public schools, and with the Governor's chief state education officer to evaluate the effectiveness of state policy intended to improve education outcomes and coordination.

What is Needed?

For many, the concept of accountability is limited to the acts of measuring, reporting, and responding to schools' and students' test scores. Once scores are reported, the schools or students are 'held accountable' through systems of rewards and sanctions, or perhaps simply publicity. Significantly, such accountability most often flows in a particular direction; students, and then their teachers and parents, are likely to be 'held accountable' by school boards, the State, or the public. There are few mechanisms for students, teachers, or families to hold accountable anyone else with responsibility in the education system. The current statewide Academic Performance Index (API), School Accountability Report Cards (SARC), and the Intensive Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) are the State's first steps toward a useful accountability system that can support education in California. They should be continued and refined to enhance their effectiveness in identifying student needs and resource deficits and promoting improvements in teaching and learning.

Even within this narrow conception of accountability as measurement and response, California must expand its view to a system of shared accountability in which improved learning results are tightly linked to improved conditions for learning. Systemic, shared accountability includes those things that the State and school districts are responsible for providing to ensure a high-quality education for all students as well as a regular review of data to *evaluate* school offerings and use of resources to promote student achievement.

Once the fundamental prerequisite for accountability - linkage of authority with responsibility - has been met, there is still the question of how effective discharge of that responsibility can be compelled. At both the state and local levels, of course, the voters have the ultimate power to act on their judgment of the performance of elected representatives and officers. This Plan describes

a structure that ensures that the public will be provided complete information regarding that performance. Moreover, within government, the Legislature and Governor share the power that comes with budgetary authority: the ultimate sanction at their disposal is simply to reduce or eliminate funding for entities or officials that are not performing satisfactorily. However, reducing funding for a low-performing school district, for example, is not generally a constructive approach; doing so merely further impairs the district's ability to perform and is contrary to the priority placed on promoting student achievement in this Plan. More often, a curtailment of discretionary expenditure authority is a more effective basic approach – that is, rather than taking away a portion of a school district's (or other entity's) funding, the Legislature and Governor, or an authority acting pursuant to their instructions, can sequester an appropriate amount of that district's funding and direct how it must be expended to improve a specific aspect or aspects of the district's performance. Discretionary expenditure authority can then be restored when the district's performance has improved. Accountability's real task is completed, in other words, not when blame is assigned for failure or punishment is meted out, but when accountability mechanisms lead to changes that foster adequate learning opportunities and improved outcomes.

Governance – Aligning Responsibilities, Authority, and Accountability

State-Level Pre K-12 and Adult Education

The structure of California's state-level governance of K-12 public education is one that has no clear lines of accountability due to multiple entities having overlapping responsibilities. Key players in the state-level governance of the public schools include:

- *The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI)* – this position is one of seven statewide elective offices specified in California's constitution. The responsibilities of the SPI are specified in statute, but the SPI is commonly expected to serve as the chief advocate for public education and manager of the State Department of Education. The SPI is also believed to be directly accountable to the people of California by virtue of the fact that the Superintendent is an elected officer.
- *The State Board of Education (SBE)* – this 11-member board is appointed by the Governor and has responsibility for setting policy for the State's public schools. The SPI serves formally as secretary to the SBE but is not considered staff to the board. The SBE maintains a nominal staff of its own to handle its business.
- *The Secretary for Education* – originally created by former Governor Pete Wilson in 1991 as Secretary for Child Development and Education, this position has never been formally established by constitutional provision or statute. Current Governor Gray Davis has continued the position but dropped the 'Child Development' portion of the title. Over time, there has been a gradual accretion of authority assigned to the position as well as an increased amount of responsibility for program administration and policy interpretation on behalf of the Governor.

- *The Governor* – by virtue of the budget authority assigned to this office, the authority to appoint members of the SBE, and selection of the Secretary for Education, the Governor has significant influence over what public education can do. In addition, the Governor is nearly always the final arbiter of policy priorities by virtue of the veto authority assigned to the position.

Local education leaders cite the existence of these multiple entities, each of which have a significant impact on education policy, and the lack of a clear delineation of roles among them, as impeding accountability for public education. Irrespective of the extent to which this is true, it is important to note that schools may receive state-level directives and advisories from each of these sources.

Any governance structure that is recommended to provide meaningful accountability at the state level must be sustainable. The scope of authority of several of the entities cited above has continually evolved over the past two decades. An effort to establish offices and delineate duties therefore must anticipate the abilities of various offices to redefine roles or insulate the system against such redefinition. In particular, the significant level of constitutional authority that rests with the Governor – as demonstrated by Governors’ creation and expansion of the Office of the Secretary for Education – has allowed the Governor to have an impact the other three and consolidate policy-making authority with offices under its control.

The interests and will of the electorate must also be considered in developing governance structures. Clearly, Californians support having an elected representative whose exclusive focus is education. With one exception, every significant state-level review of K-12 accountability has recommended that the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction be made appointive, but the State – either through action by its representative government or direct vote of the electorate – has been unwilling to act to implement that recommendation.

Accountability can be substantially increased, even in the context of multiple state-level entities with authority for education, by aligning the operations of the State Board of Education and certain aspects of the Department of Education with the Governor. We therefore recommend:

Recommendation 26

Authority over the operations of California’s PreK-12 public education system at large, and ultimate responsibility for the delivery of education to California’s PreK-12 public education students in particular, should both reside within the Office of the Governor. The Office of the Governor should have authority to implement the following functions, as assigned to its various sub-entities by the Legislature:

- **Apportion resources to schools to support teaching and learning, pursuant to statutory and budgetary direction;**
- **Manage the state financial accountability program and school district fiscal audit reviews;**

- Establish education standards and other learning expectations for students and a process for periodic review and modification of those standards and expectations;
 - Adopt K-8 textbooks (a function constitutionally assigned to the State Board of Education);
 - Establish developmentally appropriate program and operating standards for early childhood education and require continuity between the academic guidelines, standards and curricula for preschool and kindergarten;
 - Administer school improvement programs; and
 - Promote an understanding of effective uses of data to improve student learning.
-

The committee's working group on Governance gave considerable attention to the linkage between the K-12 management function, currently residing in the Department of Education – which is under the direction of an independently elected Superintendent of Public Instruction – and the Office of the Governor. We view this linkage as essential, since the Department of Education is responsible for so many crucial education administrative functions. The absence of a clear administrative structure has led to confusion and mixed messages communicated to county offices of education and local school boards, particularly when administrative functions are not implemented satisfactorily. Assurance of equitable opportunities for learning and achievement of all students requires that lines of accountability lead clearly to the Governor. To further clarify structures, roles, and responsibilities, we also recommend:

Recommendation 26.1 – The Governor should appoint a cabinet-level Chief Education Officer, to carry out, on behalf of the Governor, all state-level operations, management, and programmatic functions, and to serve as the Director of the Department of Education.

Recommendation 26.2 – The Governor should continue to appoint, with the consent of the State Senate, the State Board of Education. The Board's members should be drawn from and represent distinct geographical regions, and should reflect the ethnic and gender diversity of the state's populace. The functions of the State Board of Education should be limited to state policy matters specified by the Legislature.

Recommendation 26.3 – Once management of the California Department of Education has been transferred to the Governor's office, the separate executive director and staff of the State Board within the Department of Education should be eliminated.

A healthy and complementary relationship can exist between the Governor's Office and a Superintendent with a newly defined set of focused responsibilities that will benefit all public school children. Hence, we recommend assignment of all functions related to non-fiscal accountability to the SPI position that will enable the SPI to provide an independent and informed voice on behalf of students and their families in the annual budget and legislative deliberations that affect public schools.

Recommendation 27

The Superintendent of Public Instruction should remain an elected position and be responsible for all aspects of accountability for public education other than fiscal accountability. The Superintendent should exercise the following functions related to accountability in California’s K-12 education system:

- **Provide for and manage a comprehensive accountability system of student and institutional measurement, to include indicators of the opportunities for teaching and learning, outputs, quality of information, and governance/policy instruments that aim to ensure adequate and equitable provision of education;**
 - **Ensure compliance with special education and civil rights law by all relevant participants in the education system.**
 - **Monitor the impact of state policy on the success of local K-12 programs in fostering student achievement;**
 - **Monitor the implementation of state and federal programs to ensure that they meet the needs of all targeted students;**
 - **Provide public identification of schools that have failed to meet student achievement targets;**
 - **Define and implement the processes for intervention in schools that fail to meet student achievement targets pursuant to state and federal laws;**
 - **Serve as an advisor to the Legislature and the Governor and as an advocate to promote the State’s Master Plan for Education and system accountability; and**
 - **Act as the independent spokesperson of California’s populace, and of students in particular, in public discourse on educational issues.**
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Local-Level PreK-12 and Adult Education

Historically, Californians and their policy-makers have supported a significant degree of local control over the delivery of K-12 education. County superintendents and county boards of education were constitutionally created to provide support and oversight to communities on behalf of the State. School districts were statutorily created and given significant responsibility to determine the policies and programs that could best meet the state’s constitutional guarantee of elementary and secondary education in the context of local conditions. The scope of responsibility of these local governing entities has been significantly narrowed over time, in conjunction with the State’s assuming a greater share of the fiscal burden of providing K-12 education and in response to local districts’ uneven provision of educational opportunity, among other factors.

The ways in which local control is exercised have also been altered since the advent of collective bargaining between school boards and their unionized employees. While the governmental institution of K-12 public education has evolved in important ways since that time – for example, in a consistent trend of court cases that found the State has a basic responsibility for the operation of public schools that it cannot entirely delegate to local school districts – the role and

scope of collective bargaining have not been comprehensively reconsidered in light of that evolution.

Many advantages obtain from a significant degree of local control. Local agencies are in a position to clearly identify the distinct and diverse needs of their students and communities, and to modify the educational program to best meet those needs. Local decision making – including policy development and the determination of fiscal priorities – enhances the access of citizens to the policy functions of government, and through that access can enhance the involvement of and support in educational processes by the communities they serve. Further, the availability of differences in local programs offer families the opportunity to seek the education that they desire for their children. For these reasons, an appropriate measure of local control should be firmly reestablished.

Local control – in the context of a state guaranteed education – can best be maintained by a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the various local entities. In addition, the State should foster a configuration of local entities that leads to the optimal support of students' learning needs, maximizes educational effectiveness, and promotes efficiency. Toward these ends, we recommend:

Recommendation 28

Local school district governing boards should be assigned the policy and administrative authority and a set of management responsibilities to enable them to effectively operate schools that are responsive both to state-level standards and policy priorities and to local community needs. These responsibilities should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- **Establish a vision for the goals and objectives the district;**
- **Develop and adopt district policy on how best to implement local, state, and federal goals and requirements for the PreK-12 system as a whole, within the local context;**
- **Recruit/select highly qualified individuals for senior leadership positions;**
- **Ensure that the district superintendent is meeting the vision, goals and performance objectives of the district, and ensure that the superintendent holds district personnel accountable;**
- **Adopt a fiscally responsible budget based on the district's vision and goals, and regularly monitor the fiscal health of the district;**
- **Allocate available resources within the district so as to balance baseline equity—appropriately staffed, safe, clean, and decent schools for all students—with targeted additional resources pursuant to special funding categories described in the California Quality Education Model;**
- **Establish a framework for the district's collective bargaining process, in the instances in which bargaining is used, and adopt responsible agreements that reflect the interests of the public;**
- **Adopt district curriculum and monitor student progress;**

- **Provide support, as necessary, to ensure the success of schools within the district;**
 - **Collaborate and seek sustained positive partnerships with other non-education elements of local government, local employers, postsecondary education institutions, and community organizations; and**
 - **With particular regard to middle and secondary grades, maintain constant institutional emphasis on locally tailored efforts to achieve and maintain high rates of pupil attendance.**
-

Evidence and testimony reviewed reveal numerous local school districts that are operating efficiently and effectively in promoting the achievement of students. Unfortunately, testimony and data received indicate too many schools and school districts have not been as effective in promoting student achievement as California needs them to be. This unevenness in school/district performance is of great concern. Some of it can be addressed by assigning a set of responsibilities and authority to local school boards that are clear and aligned with the goals California has set for its public education system as a whole. The foregoing list highlights those responsibilities that have emerged as the most important to successful implementation of this Plan.

Recommendation 29

The State should take steps to bring all school districts into unified PreK-12 structures.

District governance structures should support the objectives of focusing on meeting student needs and enhancing student achievement. Such focus is necessarily served when the governing board has responsibility for the comprehensive educational interests of the students in its charge, as opposed to each student's interest for a limited portion of his or her experience. By contrast, our public schools are governed by a variety of structural arrangements, many of which perpetuate isolated approaches to education delivery within a particular sector, rather than the more aligned and collaborative approach advocated in this Master Plan. At the state level, this student focus is supported by the development of academic standards, which should inherently provide a certain level of curricular alignment among districts. However, our vision of a coherent system of schools, colleges, and universities would be fostered by the adoption of unified school districts throughout the state. The unified district approach reinforces the goal of achieving course alignment and articulation across grade levels. The Education Trust has provided data indicating that other states pursuing reforms aimed at improving student achievement have been most successful when they have chosen a unified PreK-16 approach.

Recommendation 29.1 – The Legislature should develop fiscal and governance incentives to promote local communities organizing their local schools into unified districts, and should eliminate all fiscal and other disincentives to unification.

Recommendation 30

Local districts should, where appropriate, consolidate, disaggregate, or form networks to share operational aspects, to ensure that the educational needs of their students are effectively met and that their operational efficiency is maximized.

In many areas of the state, small schools and small district school boards work together well to effectively promote student achievement. At the same time, many small districts are unable to realize the cost-efficiencies that come with larger populations, to extend to all their students the opportunities envisioned by this report as constituting a high-quality education, or may expend limited, valuable resources on business functions that might be more efficiently consolidated with those of other districts. Conversely, larger districts, which can maximize cost-efficiencies and opportunity, are often criticized for being dissociated from the communities they serve, as a simple result of their size. California students should benefit from district sizes that are designed to support optimal levels of student achievement. Types of district consolidation and networking may need to be different for purposes of educational program delivery and for business operations. The committee does not yet have sufficient data to recommend a particular array of options in this regard. We therefore recommend a process be undertaken to identify and implement these options, including appropriate incentives and disincentives, pursuant to the following recommendations:

Recommendation 30.1 – The Legislature should undertake a comprehensive study to determine the optimal size ranges for school districts with respect to both educational delivery and the conduct of business operations. The study should additionally identify a range of funding considerations that are based on size and structural options and that could be appropriately leveraged to attain optimal conditions.

Recommendation 30.2 – Each county committee on school organization should review the findings of the study and should have a period of three years to develop and recommend local plans and conduct local elections that would implement the findings of the study for all school districts within its jurisdiction.

Recommendation 31

Local districts should be provided the opportunity to exercise a degree of firmly established local control, protected from encroachment by state laws, through an amendment to the state constitution permitting those districts to adopt limited ‘home rule’ authority by votes of their electorates in a manner similar to that long authorized in the constitution for cities and counties.

Although local control is strongly favored politically, the Legislature nevertheless can and does frequently create new laws controlling various topics that had previously been matters of local discretion. A constitutional ‘home rule’ provision for school districts could limit that problem, by giving local districts the ability to develop their own “ordinances” that would supersede state law in specified areas. To be successful, a ‘home rule’ provision would have to very carefully spell out a limited set of matters which districts could control and clearly exclude areas of State interest, such as standards and accountability, compliance with civil rights and special education laws, etc.

To avoid legal confusion that might result from different ‘home rule’ ordinances on the same subject matter in districts with overlapping boundaries, the ‘home rule’ authority would necessarily be limited to unified districts – but could then function as an incentive to unification.

The concept of ‘home rule’ inherently enhances the relationship of the local electorate to its governing board, since the operational provisions granting ‘home rule’ must be adopted, and can only be amended, by the vote of the district’s citizens. Governing boards can be still more responsive to local educational priorities, and can be held more accountable by local electorates, when they are able to generate revenues locally and can demonstrate a direct connection between a revenue source and specific services. Therefore, the scope of authority of ‘home rule’ districts should include the new local taxation authority proposed in this report (see Recommendation 46).

Recommendation 32

The Legislature should initiate a state-level inquiry to examine the optimal size of county offices of education, the potential transition of county offices of education into regional entities, and the efficiencies that might be realized from the consolidation of various operational aspects of county offices to organize their services to meet current and emerging district and regional needs, including fiscal oversight and management and administrative assistance. Based on the findings of this inquiry, the Master Plan should be amended, as appropriate, to incorporate action based on the findings of this inquiry.

California’s public school system is too large and complex to be effectively managed centrally at the state level. There are local needs that are best met and oversight functions that are best carried out at a level that is neither defined by the broad perspective of the State, nor the more parochial perspectives of local districts. However, some county offices of education are either too small or too large to discharge their responsibilities effectively and efficiently. Moreover, the enormous additional investment that will be required to implement the provisions of this Master Plan prompts a search for efficiencies and cost avoidance that will enable a larger proportion of education appropriations to be directed to the core functions of teaching and learning.

County offices of education provide a set of services that are valued by most local school districts. Many provide educational services that would otherwise not be available to students or schools due to small size and California's funding mechanism, which does not generate sufficient funding for small districts to directly provide these services. Larger districts have developed internal capacities that obviate the need for county offices to do much more than review annual budgets and hear appeals of various district decisions. The cost of maintaining a county office of education in every county in the state, with similar structures and operations, must be critically examined for cost effectiveness and the potential advantages of consolidation into a reduced number of regions or consolidation of operations. In addition, the specific responsibilities assigned to county/regional offices of education should reflect the extent to which they might be instrumental in the State's effort to ensure that all schools and districts meet minimum standards for a high-quality education. County/regional offices are much better positioned to monitor compliance with certain state requirements than is a single state entity.

Recommendation 33

County/Regional offices of education should be assigned a set of functions, resources, and authority both to serve local districts in their efforts to provide comprehensive curricula to students and professional development opportunities for professional staff, and to act as monitoring agents on behalf of the State to ensure that every public school meets minimal standards of educational quality. These functions and responsibilities should include the following:

- **Directly provide educational services to students served by small districts that might not otherwise be able to provide a comprehensive array of curricular offerings or learning support and to students attending court and county community schools;**
- **Provide professional development, or facilitate the provision of professional development to education personnel in school districts requesting such services;**
- **Serve as the appellate body for parents who disagree with specified decisions of local school boards;**
- **Monitor fiscal decisions of local school boards and, when appropriate, intervene to forestall imminent bankruptcy if local budget decisions were to be implemented;**
- **Serve as the primary catalyst and facilitating agency to ensure that all schools have access to a technology infrastructure that enables electronic exchange of information and educational materials; and**
- **Monitor the facility decisions of local boards and, when appropriate, intervene to ensure that every school maintains facilities that comply with state quality assurance standards.**

Preschool-Postsecondary Education

For the past 42 years, California's postsecondary education enterprise has been guided by the *Master Plan for Higher Education*, which differentiated the missions to be pursued by each public college and university system, defined the pools from which they would select their freshman population, and established a mechanism for coordination, planning, and policy development. Upon review of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the governing boards, a particular concern emerged that there is incomplete information available on institutional and system performance and student achievement. All three public postsecondary education systems should be *required* to participate in data collection specified by the State for evaluation of their performance. Although the Joint Committee has identified the need for the University of California to expand its efforts to work more effectively with the PreK-12 community, the Legislature, and the Governor's administration to ensure that state-identified priorities are met, there is no compelling reason to alter the powers, responsibilities or structure of the Regents as specified in the State constitution. Similarly, the structure, powers, and responsibilities of the Trustees of the California State University are not in need of modification at this time. However, the Board of Governors for the California Community Colleges requires modification to elevate its powers, structure, and responsibilities commensurate with that assigned to the California State University Board of Trustees.

California also has an extensive array of regionally accredited not-for-profit and for-profit colleges and universities that make a substantial contribution to meeting the postsecondary education needs of Californians. They should continue to be considered a vital part of California's postsecondary education sector. In addition, California provides state approval to approximately 230 private, degree-granting institutions and nearly 2,500 private postsecondary vocational schools in the state, many of which are not regionally accredited. These institutions have been separately regulated and operate apart from California's education system. Both sets of non-public institutions should be explicitly incorporated into California's vision for a student-focused education system and subject to similar expectations for quality and measures of student achievement.

Effective planning has been and will continue to be essential to accommodating the demand for postsecondary education in this state. It has enabled California to leverage the resources of independent colleges and universities to complement the capacity of its public postsecondary education institutions in meeting the needs of Californians for education and training beyond high school. Long range planning should be expanded to leverage the resources of private postsecondary education institutions as well.

Long-range planning is equally essential to its preschool to adult school sectors of education. The Legislature and Governor should be able to turn to a single source to acquire information to anticipate the needs of public education in their annual policy and budget deliberations. We offer recommendations below to achieve this end:

Recommendation 34

The California Community Colleges should be reconstituted as a public trust with its board of governors responsible for overall governance, setting system policy priorities, budget advocacy, and accountability for a multi-campus system. The primary functions of the California Community Colleges should continue to include instruction in the general or liberal arts and sciences up through, but not exceeding, the second year of postsecondary education leading to associate's degrees or transfer to other institutions; education, training, and services that advance California's economic growth; and vocational and technical instruction leading to employment, and community services. Community colleges should also be authorized to:

- **Provide instruction at the upper division level jointly with the California State University, University of California, or a WASC-accredited independent or private postsecondary education institution.**
-

The California Community College system has suffered from fragmentation for decades stemming from governance responsibilities' having been assigned by statute to local boards of trustees, now 72 in number, and designation of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office as a state agency, subject to oversight by a variety of other state agencies. In addition to personnel salaries and actions being subject to approval by the Department of General Services, the State Personnel Board, and the Governor (in the case of senior staff appointments), policy priorities adopted by the Board of Governors cannot be enforced without triggering the state mandates clause of the California constitution – effectively neutralizing the Board of Governors' ability to govern the system. The result is highly unequal performance and highly unequal opportunities to learn afforded to students enrolled in community colleges throughout the state.

The community college system, to be effective, needs a clear statement of functions and authority for the Board of Governors and the local boards of trustees. This assignment of respective functions should clarify that it is the responsibility of the Board of Governors to ensure the performance of such duties as system governance, establishing statewide policy, negotiating funding, managing, and setting accountability standards for all the colleges collectively. As with its California State University and University of California counterparts, the Board of Governors should have the flexibility to delegate primary responsibility for academic matters to its faculty senate, recognizing the considerable expertise that resides within the faculty ranks, and the authority to establish and disband any number of advisory/consultation groups to assist it in making final decisions on policy priorities for the system. There is also concern about the number and size of local districts, both in terms of capacity to maintain quality teaching and learning opportunities for all students and the containment of costs for administrative oversight of the colleges. To address these concerns, we offer the following additional recommendations:

Recommendation 34.1 – The membership of the California Community College Board of Governors should be modified to include as ex-officio members the

Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Speaker of the Assembly.

Recommendation 34.2 – The responsibilities of the California Community College Board of Governors should be defined as the following:

- **Exercise general supervision over, and coordination of, the local community college districts;**
- **Provide leadership and direction through research and planning;**
- **Establish minimum conditions and standards for all districts to receive state support and to function within the system;**
- **Establish specific accountability measures and assure evaluation of district performance based on those measures;**
- **Approve courses of instruction and educational programs that meet local, regional, and state needs;**
- **Administer state operational and capital outlay support programs;**
- **Adopt a proposed system budget and allocation process;**
- **Ensure system-wide articulation with other segments of education; and**
- **Represent the districts before state and national legislative and executive agencies.**

Recommendation 34.3 – The responsibilities of the California Community College local boards of trustees should be defined as the following:

- **Establish, maintain, and oversee the colleges within each district;**
- **Assure each district meets the minimum conditions and standards established by the Board of Governors;**
- **Establish policies for local academic, operations, and facilities planning to assure accomplishment of the statutory mission within conditions and standards established by the Board of Governors;**
- **Adopt local district budgets;**
- **Oversee the procurement and management of property;**
- **Establish policies governing student conduct; and**
- **Establish policies to guide new course development, course revision/deletion, and curricular quality.**

Recommendation 34.4 – The California Community College Board of Governors should have the same degree of flexibility and authority as that of the California State University, including the authority to appoint and approve senior staff of the Board of Governors.

Recommendation 34.5 – A state assessment should be conducted on the value of and need for restructuring of local districts, with attention to the size and number of colleges in a district, as well as the scope of authority that should be assigned to each district. Should this assessment find restructuring valuable and desirable, incentives should be provided to encourage restructuring.

Recommendation 35

The status of the California State University as a public trust; and the size, composition, term of office, and responsibilities of its Board of Trustees should remain unchanged. The primary functions of the California State University should continue to include instruction in the liberal arts and sciences through the master's degree, in the professions and applied fields that require more than two years of postsecondary education, and in teacher education. It should continue to be authorized to:

- **Award the doctoral degree jointly with the University of California or with a WASC-accredited independent or private postsecondary institution;**
 - **Engage in faculty research, using state-supported facilities provided for and consistent with the primary function of the California State University.**
-

Recommendation 36

The University of California should continue to be constituted as provided in Section 9, Article IX of California's constitution. The size, composition, term of office, and responsibilities of its Board of Regents should remain unchanged. The primary functions of the University of California should continue to include instruction in the liberal arts and sciences and in the professions, including teacher education. It should continue to have exclusive jurisdiction among public postsecondary education for instruction in the professions of law, medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine. The University of California should continue to have sole authority to award doctoral degrees in all fields, except that it may agree to jointly award doctoral degrees with the California State University in selected fields. The University of California should continue to be the primary, although not exclusive, academic agency for research.

Recommendation 37

The Legislature should convene a task force to develop a strategic plan for the delivery of adult education, including a list of indicators that should be used to assess the effectiveness of California's Adult Education system. The task force assembled for this purpose should submit its plan to the Legislature for adoption.

The task force should solicit advice from representatives of the Department of Education, the California Community Colleges, local service providers in the areas of adult and noncredit education, including regional occupation centers and programs, the Employment Development

Department, at least one local workforce investment board, the Legislative Analyst's Office, and the Governor's Office. Advisors should also include representatives from important stakeholder groups including business and adult education students.

California's commitment to educating its populace is reflected in its provision of educational services to adults through both the K-12 and the community college systems. These services address adults' needs to become self-sufficient in a timely manner. Attainment of self sufficiency usually entails developing basic educational skills, learning English, acquiring vocational training, and otherwise preparing to participate effectively and productively in society and the economy. The State has not established systematic procedures for determining how and what services should be provided to help adults achieve self sufficiency, however, and this multi-million dollar enterprise is currently difficult for some adult learners to navigate as they embark on efforts to prepare themselves to meet the demands of the contemporary high-performance workplace and to participate effectively in civic affairs. It is in the State's interest to ensure that the delivery system for adult education meets students' immediate learning objectives and that students successfully transition into employment, gain English language literacy and civic skills, gain access to additional formal education, and pursue the long-term skills development goals they have identified as part of a plan for lifelong learning.

Increased efficiency would result if the provision of adult education services were delineated by curricular function or geographic location between school districts and community colleges. Adult education providers should target elementary and secondary basic skills courses to California adults seeking instruction that enables them to become self sufficient, as well as instruction that leads to meeting requirements for high school diplomas or their equivalent, and be assigned responsibility for instructing adults without high school diplomas in the knowledge and skills assessed in the California High School Exit Examination.

Other categories of instruction provided by adult education programs and community colleges that overlap should be reviewed to determine if this same delineation, or any other, would be appropriate. Therefore, for all instructional categories, the task force should assess whether K-12 operated adult schools should be limited to providing services to students who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent and the community colleges limited to providing services to those who either have a high school diploma or who are at least 18 and whose academic goals include a certificate, an associate's degree, or transfer preparation. Both providers should also be obligated to structure their educational offerings to be consistent with contemporary academic standards.

Remedial or developmental instruction aimed at preparing adults for enrollment in credit-bearing collegiate coursework is part of the mission assigned to community colleges and, to a lesser extent, a function performed by the California State University and University of California systems. Such instruction should not be described as leading toward a high school diploma or its equivalent and should not be viewed as part of the adult education delivery system.

English as a Second Language, Elementary and Secondary Basic Skills, and Vocational Education courses should be considered state priorities for adult education. These categories constitute the greatest needs for the majority of adult education participants. Other categories of

instruction provide valued services to local communities and may be provided as resources permit. The State should also ensure that resources are available to identify and accommodate learning disabilities among adult participants, many of whom struggle through academic experiences with unidentified learning disabilities. Counseling services must also be supported to assist adult learners in pursuing life-long learning, including opportunities to build basic communication, information-handling, civic, and other job related skills.

Vocational Education programs included in adult education should be aligned programmatically with other workforce preparation programs in the community, including those linked with one-stop career centers and regional occupation programs and centers because of the services both sectors provide to the adult learner.

In some areas of the state, community colleges have been the primary, if not exclusive, providers of adult education. By definition, remedial education provided by postsecondary education institutions is precollegiate instruction and hence overlaps the function suggested as proper for adult education. This fact does not have to result in confusion or undesirable competition, provided the area of overlap is both constrained and well defined. To ensure that such confusion is avoided, we further recommend:

Recommendation 37.1 – To ensure that comparable quality of instruction is available to all Californians enrolling in adult continuing education, the State should quickly move toward reciprocity of instructional credentials, based on appropriate minimum qualifications, between the K-12-operated adult and community college-operated noncredit education systems, to allow instructors to teach in either or both systems.

Recommendation 37.2 – State priorities for adult and noncredit education should include English as a Second Language, Elementary and Secondary Basic Skills, and Vocational Education. The State should strive to provide adequate resources to ensure that these priorities are addressed by all adult education providers.

Recommendation 38

The Legislature should review the founding statutes of the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) and should confirm or amend them, as appropriate, to ensure that the commission has the capacity and authority to carry out its mission as the coordinating entity for postsecondary education and chief objective adviser to the Governor and Legislature regarding the continuing improvement of California postsecondary education.

In order to meet the comprehensive, yet diverse, educational needs of all Californians, the 1960 *Master Plan for Higher Education* delineated a multi-part system of postsecondary education including the three public segments (the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California), coordinated with California's independent colleges

and universities. In order to provide the Legislature and the Governor a coherent, broad analysis and objective advice regarding the current and future interrelated operation of these postsecondary segments, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) was created in 1973.

In our current time of profound change and enormous enrollment growth, CPEC's coordination and analysis mission continues to be of vital importance. However, the commission is currently impeded by insufficient funding and by a plethora of statutory and legislative directives regarding its work that are beyond its capacity to fulfill. This has lessened the commission's capacity to speak for the broad public interest on the issues most critical to postsecondary student success. The commission is further impeded by its not being assigned sufficient authority to require coordinated efforts on the part of the postsecondary segments. The Legislature should ensure adequate funding for CPEC to carry out its most essential functions, and eliminate those lesser priority demands that stretch the agency beyond its primary goals. More broadly, this Joint Committee believes that CPEC must provide more than policy analysis; it must provide a prominent voice for the public interest in postsecondary education, aiming to inform the Legislature and the public on the fiscal and programmatic implications of California's need for a better-educated population and on how California postsecondary education could be improved to enable all Californians to realize their potential.

While the University of California, the California State University, the California Community Colleges, and California's independent colleges and universities hold the public interest central to their missions and planning, they cannot individually see or plan for the overall development between them. CPEC must serve the roles of both coordinating and planning for a much more integrated and visionary approach to postsecondary education between and among the segments. The Joint Committee further believes the commission would benefit from the immediate involvement of the leadership of the different segments. Hence, we recommend:

Recommendation 38.1 - The Commission's primary functions should include:

- **Providing long-range planning for meeting the postsecondary education needs of Californians, including the adequate provision of facilities, programs, and campuses, and assessing and advising state policymakers regarding priorities dictated by current and evolving public needs;**
- **Providing policy and fiscal analyses regarding the most critical issues affecting the success of Californians in attending and graduating from postsecondary education institutions;**
- **Coordinating the analyses, policy recommendations, and long-range planning proposals of various public and private entities, as needed, to secure the long-term fiscal stability and public financing of public postsecondary education, including the development of student fee and financial aid policies and the efficient use of state resources across segmental boundaries;**
- **Advising the Legislature on appropriate accountability indicators for postsecondary education, to be adopted in statute, and subsequently reporting annually to the Legislature and the Governor on the performance of public postsecondary institutions in meeting the adopted indicators.**

- Evaluating and reporting to the Legislature and the Governor the extent to which public postsecondary education institutions are operating consistent with state policy priorities and discharging the responsibilities assigned to them in statute;
- Reviewing and approving new public campuses for postsecondary education; and
- Reviewing academic programs for public, postsecondary education institutions.

Recommendation 38.2 – CPEC should be given the authority to require information to be submitted by the various segments of postsecondary education. Each year, immediately prior to the Legislature’s postsecondary education budget deliberations, CPEC should provide a report to the budget committee chairs of both houses, and to the Legislative Analyst, regarding the record of the various segments in responding to the Commission’s requests for information.

Recommendation 38.3 – CPEC should continue to be advised by the existing statutory advisory committee. The segmental representatives to the CPEC statutory advisory committee should consist of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, the Chancellor of the California State University, the President of the University of California, the President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, or an executive-level designee of each.

Recommendation 39

The Legislature and Governor should immediately create a new California Education Commission (CEC). The CEC should have initial responsibility for planning, coordination, and analysis that encompasses preschool and K-12 education, as well as the interface between K-12 and postsecondary education.

The lack of overall coordination among the State’s multiple education agencies is one of the largest systemic governance problems in California. Combined with insufficient delineation of authority, this problem results in an educational system that is not structured in a manner conducive to consistent responsiveness to the comprehensive needs of learners. As has been discussed throughout this report, coordination is necessary not only among the distinct postsecondary education sectors, which operate in concert to serve all Californians, but between K-12 and postsecondary education, as well as between preschool and K-12. To realize this Plan’s vision of a coherent system of education in California, a single entity – a California Education Commission – should be assigned responsibility for these coordinating, planning, and forecasting functions, encompassing PreK-12 education and the interface between the PreK-12 and the postsecondary education sectors.

The California Education Commission should initially focus on the planning and coordinating functions related to the interface of the PreK-12 and postsecondary sectors, since there is an absolute deficiency of structural capacity in California to address those issues today. As they pursue their educational goals, California students encounter critical disjunctures within our education system. These disjunctures pertain especially to many aspects of the transition from high school to college, and to joint programs that span multiple segments of education.

The development of rational public policy for education requires the availability of comprehensive data, as well as other critical information, on which to base judgments of program effectiveness, policy and fiscal needs, demographically-driven needs, and other critical issues. These data should incorporate, but not be limited to, information regarding students, personnel, facilities, and instructional materials. California's many education and state agencies currently gather and maintain significant amounts of data related to education, but their data collection efforts are fragmented – often data on similar elements are gathered pursuant to differing data standards, such that the information cannot be integrated in a manner that can serve public policy interests. These multiple data sources can be better combined to enable a more complete understanding of the current and anticipated conditions of our education system only if they are gathered pursuant to common standards and maintained comprehensively within a single entity. The proposed roles related to multiple aspects of public education that would be assigned to the California Education Commission would make it the logically appropriate entity to carry out the function of serving as the state's education data repository. Moreover, many observers ascribe conflicts of interest to agencies that both collect/maintain and use data; such perceived conflicts could be substantially reduced by requiring the CEC to publish the methodology and assumptions used when using collected data for analytic purposes.

To ensure that the critical functions assigned to the commission are effectively met, we further recommend:

Recommendation 39.1. – The commission's primary functions should be:

- **Providing long-range analysis and planning for meeting the educational needs of all Californians;**
- **Providing policy and fiscal advice, based on data analysis, that represents the public interest in California's education system;**
- **Serving as California's statewide education data repository;**
- **Evaluating the extent to which all public education institutions are operating consistent with state policy priorities;**
- **Advising the Legislature and the Governor on the potential and actual impacts of major education policy proposals or initiatives;**
- **Coordinating statewide articulation of curriculum and assessment between the PreK-12 and postsecondary education sectors;**
- **Providing long-term planning for the development of joint and other shared use of facilities and programs between PreK-12 and postsecondary education entities;**
- **Sponsoring and directing inter-segmental programs that benefit students making the transition from secondary school to college and university; and**

- **Coordinating outreach activities among PreK-12 schools and postsecondary education and work-sector entities.**

Recommendation 39.2 – The Legislature should identify and implement effective mechanisms to compel all relevant agencies with responsibility for gathering and maintaining comprehensive data on one or more aspects of California’s education system, preschool through university, to submit specified data to the commission.

Recommendation 39.3 – The Joint Committee should consider structuring the California Education Commission with eight lay representatives: four appointed by the Governor, two appointed by the Senate Rules Committee, and two appointed by the Assembly Speaker. In addition, the Superintendent of Public Instruction should serve as the chair of the commission. This structural option should be evaluated against other options and the preferred model submitted to the Legislature and Governor for adoption.

Recommendation 40

All oversight of state-approved private colleges and universities offering academic degrees at the associate of arts level or higher should be transferred from the Department of Consumer Affairs to the California Postsecondary Education Commission, to ensure the quality and integrity of degrees awarded under the auspices of the State of California.

California has an enviable reputation for the quality of its regionally accredited public and independent colleges and universities. However, the private, non-accredited sector has not always shared in that reputation, a fact that led to enactment of the Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education Act in 1989. These institutions are currently regulated by the Department of Consumer Affairs’ Bureau of Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education, which was created by 1997 legislation as the successor to the independent council created by the 1989 Act. The Joint Committee is concerned, both about the difficulties the Bureau has encountered in its efforts to implement the complex, and occasionally conflicting provisions of the 1997 legislation, and about the existence of separate governance structures for each sector of postsecondary education. The absence of confidence in the quality of academic programs provided by state-approved private institutions frustrates the ambitions of students who seek to move between these institutions and regionally accredited public and independent institutions.

In addition to academic degree-granting institutions, a number of private institutions focus on workforce training and preparation for a variety of careers. The Governor has proposed that vocational and workforce preparation programs should be consolidated to achieve greater coordination and common standards for assessing performance. There is merit to further consideration of this proposal and we therefore suggest no change at this time for unaccredited postsecondary vocational schools. Accordingly, we offer the following additional recommendations:

Recommendation 40.1 – The California Postsecondary Education Commission should develop standards to promote articulation, when appropriate, and to foster collaborative shared use of facilities and instructional equipment between state-approved private colleges and universities awarding academic degrees and regionally accredited public and independent colleges and universities.

Recommendation 40.2 – The California Postsecondary Education Commission should be designated as the state approval agency for veterans' institutions and veterans' courses, and should have the same powers as are currently conferred on the Director of Education by Section 12090 et seq. of the Education Code, to enter into agreements and cooperate with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, or any other federal agency, regarding approval of courses, and to approve and supervise institutions that offer courses to veterans.

Shared Accountability

An accountability system for California must be guided by valid, comprehensive, understandable, and regularly reported data on a set of indicators that permit useful, informed decisions and judgments about student learning and the conditions under which the students learn. Ultimately, adequate and well-advised support for public schools depends upon the public's will to shape California's educational and other policy priorities and to making wise investments on behalf of high-quality and equitable schooling. A system of multiple indicators for accountability and improvement is crucial to marshalling public will and to wise investments in the schooling that most benefits students and the state. To develop such a system of accountability for California, the State must be guided by the following principles:

- Testing may be a necessary part of an accountability system; however, testing does not equal accountability;
- Accountability systems increase the probability of, but do not guarantee, high-quality practice leading to positive outcomes;
- Effective accountability systems call attention to needs and direct resources for addressing those needs, rather than simply initiating punitive measures;
- Indicators, like test scores, are information for an accountability system; they are not the system itself;
- Tests can enhance or undermine learning and accountability, depending on what they measure, how they are used, and how they are administered; and
- Accountability occurs only when policymakers and education providers act on information in ways that create better opportunities and outcomes for individuals and groups of students.

Educational indicators must include both input and outcome measures. The reasons for the inclusion of input measures is that some aspects of schools – for example, the provision of minimally adequate and safe facilities, and access to a curriculum of sufficient breadth – should be considered basic requirements of all districts and basic rights of all students, whether or not

they influence outcome measures. Outcome measures may be insufficient to reflect compliance with these basic requirements and rights, and therefore input standards are needed as well.

Two types of input standards are proposed. The first, called *guidelines*, would be used as a model against which a district could compare its own expenditure choices. The elements in these guidelines would be based on the proposed California Quality Education Model⁵⁰ that would generate target funding levels in California. The second set of input standards would establish *minimum requirements* for all districts and schools, which they could not fall below under any conditions and for which the State would have an obligation to ensure the provision of adequate resources. The combination of *guidelines* and *minimum requirements* would therefore provide districts with flexibility in devising their priorities for spending, while also protecting students by establishing certain absolute minimum requirements.

To build this shared accountability system, the following actions should be taken:

Recommendation 41

The State should establish a system of regularly reported indicators for PreK-12 accountability and improvement and develop a system of appropriate rewards and interventions, based on those indicators, that will promote continuous improvement of student achievement.

The Legislature should develop and the Superintendent of Public Instruction should report yearly on a comprehensive set of educational indicators, constructed from the data provided by an integrated, longitudinal, learner-focused data system and from other school-level data about educational resources, conditions, and learning opportunities. Such indicators must be easy to understand and trusted as valid and reliable. They must enable policymakers, professionals, families, and the public to monitor the status and quality of the educational system and provide information to guide the improvement of policy and practice.

To be useful, the state accountability system should monitor all levels (student, education personnel, school, district, local and state governing boards, state education agencies, Legislature, and Governor) of the educational system, and include appropriate indicators that measure the effectiveness of each level (PreK-postsecondary education) in exercising its responsibilities. Consequently, the State's indicators should enable the public to hold policymakers and governing bodies accountable for providing the commitment, policy mechanisms, resources, and conditions necessary to a high-quality system of education, as well as to hold schools, educators, and students accountable for the outcomes that result.

While this Master Plan focuses on holding all participants in the education system accountable for student outcomes, comprehensive understanding of student achievement levels is informed by identification of the availability of learning resources and opportunities. Additional

⁵⁰ See recommendations in the Affordability section of this Master Plan for a description of the California Quality Education model.

information on the resources and opportunities to learn provided to students should be reported to the public and used by the Superintendent of Public Instruction to help the public gain a greater understanding of student achievement.

The indicators should provide comprehensive information about all schools, not just about those that are low-performing. Although there are many exemplary schools, the State needs information about these schools just as it needs information about schools in which students are underserved. Finally, the indicators should be structured to permit analysis of opportunities and outcomes by racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gender populations, and among students assigned to various programs within schools. Given the intended purposes of these indicators, we further recommend the following:

Recommendation 41.1 – The K-12 Academic Performance Index (API) should be expanded in statute so that it includes grade promotion and other indicators of academic outcomes, in addition to multiple measures of student achievement and indicators of opportunities for teaching and learning.

Recommendation 41.2 – The Superintendent of Public Instruction should identify appropriate school-level indicators of schools’ status regarding the availability and use of high-quality learning resources, conditions, and opportunities, based on standards that specify what government agencies – the State and school districts – must provide all schools. This information should be collected by the California Education Commission and reported by the Superintendent of Public Instruction in a format that permits comparison against standards arising from the state’s California Quality Education Model and made publicly available through revision of the School Accountability Report Card.

Recommendation 41.3 – The California Education Commission should collect appropriate and relevant data to allow the Superintendent of Public Instruction to assess and report on the effectiveness of California’s programs for young children, and integrate these data collection and analysis efforts with the K-12 API effort.

Recommendation 41.4 – The State should create benchmarks and criteria, based on prototype schools, that will serve as desirable models of high-quality schools. They would also serve as the basis for determining adequacy of funding and provide potential expenditure streams to guide local education decision makers. The State should also collect and disseminate information about actual schools with effective programs and practices that promote student achievement.

Recommendation 41.5 – The State should develop a long-term strategic plan for the meaningful use of accountability data and indicators that are linked to state educational goals by state and local policymakers, educators, and all Californians to determine the impact of programs and interventions designed to improve learning conditions and outcomes. The plan should also contain strategies for remedying identified inadequacies.

Recommendation 41.6 – The State should develop a series of progressive interventions in K-12 education that support low performing schools’ efforts to build their organizational capacity, develop high-quality programs, and support student learning, particularly in schools of the greatest need. The State should also develop a series of progressive rewards that recognize schools for significant improvement and high achievement. The criteria for implementing interventions and rewards should be clearly defined and linked to the evaluation of annual performance data.

Recommendation 41.7 – The State should develop a series of definitive actions to apply as consequences to any entity within the public education system that fails to meet its responsibilities. These actions should range from loss of flexibility in defined expenditure decisions to the loss of control of its responsibilities.

Recommendation 41.8 – The accountability system should enable policymakers and the public to detect performance barriers beyond the level of the school, and distinguish carefully among actors or agencies primarily causing them. At a minimum, the Superintendent of Public Instruction should measure, report, and use all performance indicators at the state and district levels, as well as at the school level, and develop mechanisms to hold state agencies and districts directly accountable for their schools’ performance, consistent with the discussion of accountability on pages 108-109 of this report.

Recommendation 41.9 – The State should establish a consistent and straightforward way for local schools to describe their expenditure and programmatic decisions, to compare them with the State’s prototype expenditure guidelines, minimum standards, and outcome goals, and to clarify the trade-offs implicit in budget decisions.

Recommendation 42

The California Department of Education should expand adult education course standards to include student performance measures such as those developed by the National Skill Standards Board, the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), and Equipped for the Future.

Currently there are state-approved model standards for five of the ten existing categories of noncredit and adult education. The established standards support programs in English as a Second Language, Adult Elementary and Secondary Skills, Parent Education, Older Adult, and Adults with Disabilities programs. With the exception of those for the Adults with Disabilities category, the standards are currently being reviewed and updated by providers of adult education services. If the program categories are revised to include an emphasis on workforce learning, these standards should be expanded to include student performance measures such as those developed by the National Skills Standards Board, SCANS, and Equipped for the Future. To promote meeting these multiple standards for adult education, we further recommend:

Recommendation 42.1 – The State should support and expand existing accountability mechanisms for adult education providers that emphasize student performance and reward institutions for improving student achievement. The State should also encourage incorporation of the foregoing standards for workplace skills and adoption of state standards for student achievement.

Recommendation 43

The State should bring postsecondary education into an integrated accountability system by developing a set of accountability indicators that are consistent with state policy objectives and institutional missions and that would monitor quality and equity in access and achievement of all students in common academic content areas. All public, independent, and private institutions should be required to participate in the reporting of these accountability indicators as a condition of receiving state moneys either through direct appropriation or student financial aid.

The principle of accountability should apply at both the PreK-12 and postsecondary levels, although the particulars of accountability must differ for the two levels. While elementary and secondary standards work toward a set of knowledge and skills common to all students, postsecondary certificate and degree programs are based on student specialization in particular disciplines, so that multiple measures must be developed to address the various specializations. All postsecondary education institutions require their undergraduates to complete a common set of general education courses, which could serve as a foundation for accountability in common content areas. Postsecondary institutions should determine additional measures of accountability for undergraduate major and graduate subject matter areas, for which their respective faculty establish competencies. The Monterey Bay campus of the California State University has already proceeded to develop “major learning requirements” for each of its majors; those requirements warrant examination to identify the challenges that must be overcome to successfully make progress in this area.

Efforts to bring the postsecondary segments into an integrated accountability system should incorporate, yet move beyond the input measures traditionally used for accreditation and other purposes, measuring more fully the student and institutional *outcomes* that reflect State and institutional priorities. Included in these outcome measures should be labor market participation of graduates, such as those currently used by many business schools. They should provide information that assists consumers in making informed decisions on accessing postsecondary education, assists policy-makers in determining state policy and fiscal investment decisions, and assists institutions in their efforts to achieve continuous improvement. An expanded accountability system should build on the initial, but insufficient, accountability mechanisms that California already has put in place under the aegis of the Community Colleges Partnership for Excellence and the University of California and California State University partnership models. These models document enrollment, successful course completion, advancement to the next academic level within basic skill disciplines, workforce preparation, degree and certificate

attainment, and the achievement of university transfer. These partnerships should be expanded to incorporate the Legislature as a full member of the partnership between the Governor and each postsecondary education sector. In this regard, we further recommend:

Recommendation 43.1 – The State’s accountability framework for postsecondary education should be improved by modification and expansion of the ‘partnership’ budget approach, currently applied to the University of California and the California State University systems, to include all postsecondary education, clarify the link between performance and funding, and adopt realistic alternatives for times of revenue downturns.

Recommendation 43.2 – The State should specify the set of indicators of student and institutional performance on which every public college and university must provide data annually, along with an implementation timeline.

Summary

The State has a responsibility to monitor the performance of public education institutions and, in the case of K-12 schools, is ultimately accountable for the proper use of public funds to ensure that every student is provided access to a high-quality education in a safe and properly maintained facility. As a practical matter, accountability for educational outcomes is, and should be, shared among a variety of people and entities. Holding these multiple actors properly accountable requires that their respective shares of responsibility be clear and broadly understood. The recommendations in this section of the Master Plan identify the major actors, delineate their responsibilities, and suggest ways in which they should be held accountable for their actions. Building a system of shared responsibility requires:

- Redefining the responsibilities of the Governor, the Board of Education, and Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) so that they are complementary to each other, and assigning ultimate responsibility for the public schools to the Governor’s Office.
- Clearly defining the powers and responsibilities of various state, regional/county, and local governance and administrative entities for all sectors of public education.
- Charging the SPI with responsibility for developing indicators of the opportunities for teaching and learning that are necessary to support high-quality education for every student, based on the elements of the California Quality Education Model, and with using those indicators to help parents and policymakers to interpret student achievement data.
- Promoting the use of locally developed assessment on a frequent basis, to provide teachers with information that would enable them to adjust their instructional strategies, prompt them to assess for potential learning disabilities, and/or help them refer students to supplemental support services, as needed.
- Requiring public postsecondary education to take actions that would result in a clear understanding of a set of learning outcomes are the students it enrolls expected to achieve and appropriate measures for evaluating the performance of its campuses.

- Incorporating data on student achievement into a state-level accountability system at all education levels.

In addition, serious attention should be given to examining the feasibility of using certain labor market outcomes as part of a system of indicators of the performance of education institutions, particularly for assessing the readiness of graduates of secondary and postsecondary institutions to successfully enter the workforce and engage in civic activities.